

# Improvement Initiatives

## Quotable Quote:

"Is it better than it was before?" – Jay Watson

June 2011

## “Improved Attitude = Improved Customer Service”

Learn more about Kelly Services at:

[http://www.kellyservices.us/web/us/services/en/pages/careertips\\_sept09\\_custservtips.html](http://www.kellyservices.us/web/us/services/en/pages/careertips_sept09_custservtips.html)



If you're convinced that attitude rules, you might become a "positive attitude guru" if you use some of the following tips and practice your delivery until it becomes automatic. Here are some suggestions that you can use starting tomorrow.

### Attitude Tips to Improve Your Customer Service

First, foremost, and the number-one tip: *Always start the day with a good attitude.* Be aware that, at first, this may be easier said than done. If you're a naturally "sunny" or "glass is always half-full" person, this may be an easy tip to put into action immediately. However, if you have other issues – workplace, personal, financial, family, etc. – that are creating negative influences in your life, you may have to dedicate more effort to generate this attitude on a daily basis.

*Smile!* While the benefits of a genuine smile are obvious in face-to-face encounters, it has also been proven that smiling when on the telephone or even during an online customer service "chat" sends out positive signals to your customer. Although opinions differ on the reasons that smiling is "transmitted" through a telephone line or during electronic communications, there is agreement that it happens consistently. Practice your smile diligently.

*Learn active listening.* Hearing is often mistakenly confused with listening. Hearing is simply a biological function, while listening is a learned skill. Superior customer service is dependent on effective listening. Excellent listening is highly influenced by a strong positive attitude. Remember that active listening also involves asking pertinent questions.

*continued on next page*

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## An Office Romance ... (*Risky Business?*) by Albert J. Perotti, III



Generally, workplace romances that are ongoing and going well pose few or no problems. It is when the relationship turns rocky or ends that trouble usually starts. When asked to list the most possible outcomes of workplace romance, the HR Managers interviewed by the Society for Human Resource Management mentioned the following ...

*continued on page 3*

## Customer Service *(continued...)*

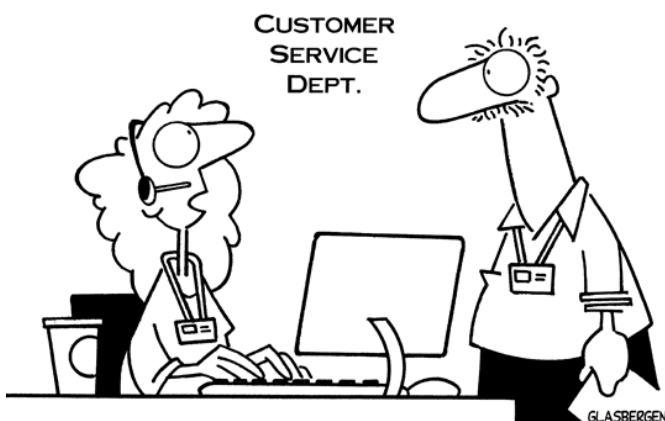
This enhances the customer service contact by a) displaying that you have listened to the client closely, b) gives you the proper information to solve the problem or satisfy the request, and c) prevents you from “assuming” an issue that doesn’t exist or constructing an answer that does not fit the question.

*Don’t blow smoke; take action.* All of the benefits of a great attitude could be wasted if you neglect to answer the question or solve the problem. Even if you encounter a serious customer issue, your helpful, concerned attitude should diffuse most of the original anger and frustration. Your smile and active listening skills should give your customer the ability to explain their question or problem sufficiently. You should now *take action* to maximize the good will you’ve generated. While your attitude is crucial, it cannot answer questions or solve problems without your action. Depending on your operational authority, you may be able to solve most issues immediately for your customer.

If the question, issue, or problem is beyond your authority, explain that to your customer. Your attitude should permit you to explain the situation positively. Be sure to tell your customer what action you will take, even if it involves moving up the organization chart ladder to solve the problem. By this time, you should have established your credibility and concern for your customer’s issue. They should, therefore, be reasonable and accepting of your answer and trust that you will take the actions necessary to accomplish the customer’s wishes or solve their problem. Be sure you do it *immediately*. Your customer – and management – will definitely notice your actions and be quite pleased.

Customer service starts and ends with attitude. Your attitude – good or poor – will be more important than the actual answers you give and the actions you take. While you need to give the right answers and take the appropriate actions, your customer interaction will be most affected by the attitude you display. Your customer, even if formerly displeased, should return to a calm state, allowing you to effectively answer their question, give the proper advice, or solve their problem quickly and efficiently.

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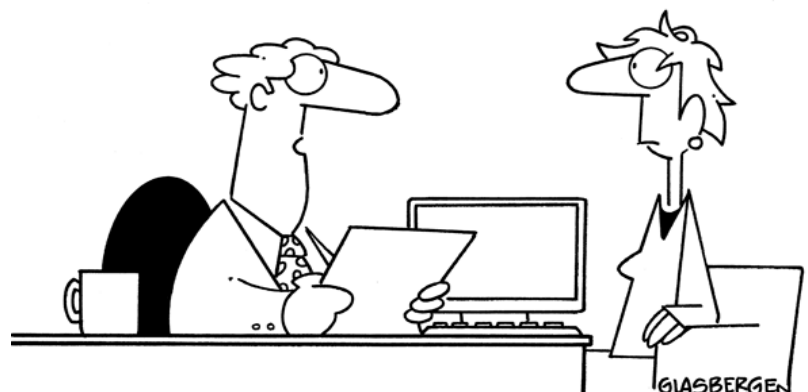


**“Who picked ‘I Can’t Get No Satisfaction’ to be our on-hold music?”**

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**“Do you have any acting experience? We’re looking for Customer Service agents who can act like they give a damn.”**

## A CLOSER LOOK: Improving Business Processes

Here's some 'Quick Resources' ...

**Karen Martin** provides Lean transformation support to organizations of all types, with particular expertise transforming office, service, government, knowledge work and creative environments.

Karen's healthcare-rich background includes clinical, administrative, and regulatory work in hospitals, post-acute care settings, payor services, medical research, clinical laboratories, physician group practices, integrative medicine and behavioral healthcare.

Karen is an instructor for the University of California, San Diego's Lean Enterprise program and San Diego State University's new Advanced Lean program. Additional academic experience includes faculty, guest lecturer and/or extension program instructor posts at Azusa Pacific University, California State University, Northridge, California State University, San Marcos, University of California, Bakersfield, University of California, Los Angeles.

Contact her at: <http://www.ksmartin.com/index.html>

**Pascal Dennis** is a professional engineer, author and advisor to North American firms making the lean leap. Pascal developed his skills on the Toyota shop floor in North America and Japan and by working with major international companies. He is a faculty member of the Lean Enterprise Institute.

Pascal has been a manager of operations, human resources, finance, and health, safety & environment. He has supported lean implementation at leading international companies in sectors as diverse as automotive, process industries, heavy equipment, construction and health care.

Pascal is the author of several award-winning books. His last book, *Getting the Right Things Done – A Leader's Guide to Planning & Execution*, won the Shingo Prize. His latest book is *The Remedy -- Bringing Lean Out of the Factory to Transform the Entire Organization* (Wiley, New York 2010).

Contact him at: [http://leansystems.org/cart.php?page=about\\_us](http://leansystems.org/cart.php?page=about_us)

**Mark Graban** is a Senior Fellow at the [Lean Enterprise Institute](http://www.leanenterprise.org) and is the author of the book *Lean Hospitals: Improving Quality, Patient Safety, and Employee Satisfaction*, winner of a 2009 Shingo Research and Professional Publication Award. He is the founder and lead contributor of [LeanBlog.org](http://www.leanblog.org), started in January 2005.

Mark is an experienced consultant and change agent, with a background in Industrial and Mechanical Engineering, with an MBA from MIT Sloan Leaders for Global Operations Program (previously known as Leaders for Manufacturing). Mark has worked in automotive (General Motors), the PC industry (Dell), and industrial products (Honeywell). At Honeywell, Mark was certified as a "Lean Expert" (Lean Black Belt).

Since August 2005, Mark has worked in the "lean healthcare" world, where he coached lean teams at client sites in North America and the United Kingdom, including medical laboratories and hospitals. Mark's mission is to apply Lean and Toyota Production System principles to help build strong organizations, to improve quality of care and patient safety, to improve the customer/patient experience, and to help the development of employees.

Contact him at: <http://www.leanblog.org/>

## Office Romance (continued)

stats:

- marriage (55%)
- complaints of favoritism (28%)
- claims of sexual harassment (24%)
- decreased productivity of those involved (24%) or of co-workers (11%)
- decreased morale of co-workers (16%)

And when the romance ends, HR Managers anticipate complaints of:

- retaliation (17%)
- stalking (12%)
- physical violence (5%)

### Follow Up

So, how do you make sure those love-struck employees don't eventually strike out against each other - or worse, the company? No matter what stance your company takes regarding workplace romance, many experts recommend the following basic precautions:

If you haven't done so, implement, disseminate and unconditionally enforce policies on dating and family relationships in the workplace to promote uniform treatment of all employees. Have a legal professional review these policies to ensure compliance with federal, state and local laws.

Learn more at:

<http://www.appleone.com/StaffingSuccess/0203/workplace.aspx>



### Mr. Watson's Opus

As we approach the third year with our e-learning venture, I truly appreciate the reception and support we continue to receive. We are experiencing over 3,000 "visits" and over 50,000 "hits" a month, affirming our DIY approach to the continuous improvement methodologies. Please continue using the complimentary materials and tell other self-directed learners about the sites. More importantly, continue promoting the "Safer, Better, Faster" precepts for Operations Excellence. Thank you for allowing me my own unique ways. – *Jay*



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*I don't host a blog, but - here's one of the best Lean blogs on the web today!*

*(Tim does a great job!) <http://www.aleanjourney.com/>*

**Seeking a Lean Consultant?? The professionals at LEI are tops!**

*(They wrote the book on Lean Thinking!)*

<http://www.lean.org/>



**FACTOID: Lockheed Martin Corporation**, the world's largest defense contractor, has been implementing lean production techniques corporate-wide since the late 1990s. Lockheed Martin's "LM21 Operating Excellence" initiative provides a common management and operating system for implementing lean and Six Sigma tools throughout Lockheed Martin business units and facilities.

As stated in March 2004 by Lockheed Martin Chairman and CEO Vance Coffman, "LM 21 acts as a catalyst for facilitating improvements in every aspect of the design and manufacturing process. At last count, the LM21 process was responsible for more than **\$5 Billion** in net savings across our corporation. Those savings not only hold down costs - which, by the way, are mostly passed through to our customers - but they also accrue over time, resulting in streamlined operations, reduced overhead, better quality, less re-work, improved productivity and enhanced overall performance."

While initial implementation of LeanSigma focused on manufacturing operations (e.g., airplanes, missiles), application of "lean thinking" has expanded to research and development operations as well as to **administrative and support activities**.

The status of LeanSigma implementation varies by both business unit and facility. Primary drivers for LeanSigma implementation at Lockheed Martin include business competitiveness, customer expectations (U.S. military interest in lean), and the desire for a standard, continuous improvement quality management and operating system and toolbox throughout diverse business units.

Competitive pressures have intensified in the U.S. defense sector since 1990, as federal defense budgets contracted and defense contractors consolidated through mergers.

Learn more at: <http://www.epa.gov/lean/studies/lockheed.htm>

## Lean Leader Quote

*“Go to the place, talk to the people, embrace the problem.” – David Mann*

## Two Tools in a Tool Box

“Lean manufacturing: Guidelines for success” is a checklist that will help you to assess your current status and then your on-going progress in adopting and adapting to lean manufacturing criteria.

The checklist can also serve as a “how do you measure up?” starting point to stimulate thought and discussion among various numbers of your management team.

As a result of this assessment and management discussion, your management team should be in a better position to develop and implement an aggressive action plan for a lean supply chain.

<http://www.reliableplant.com/Read/134/lean-manufacturing-guidelines>

A great article on Corporate Culture and Change ...

<http://www.lean-sigma-results.com/corporate-culture.html>

### Improvement Initiatives LLC

Managing Editor, Jay Watson

2135 e. La Jolla Drive  
Tempe, Az 85282

(480) 820-0877



# Off the page...

## Introducing Originality in Lean Thinking

<http://www.bobemiliani.com/lln.html>

M.L. “Bob” Emiliani (b. 2 June 1958) is a university professor, researcher, author, historian of progressive management, and executive trainer. He has over 20 years of experience in aerospace, consumer products, and service industries, and has had front-line responsibility for implementing Lean principles and practices in the manufacturing shop floor, supply networks, and in higher education (academics). Bob is a leading figure in the Lean movement and is dedicated to helping people correctly understand and implement Lean management.

Born in Miami, Florida, his father Cesare was an internationally recognized geologist and micropaleontologist and his mother Rosita was a homemaker. He has a sister, Sandra. Bob graduated from Coral Gables High School and went on to the University of Miami (Coral Gables, Fla.) where he received a B.S. in mechanical engineering. He then earned an M.S. degree in chemical engineering from the University of Rhode Island (Kingston, RI) and a Ph.D. from Brown University (Providence, RI). Bob married Lucinda Bronico in 1985 and they have two children, Michael and Julia.

Bob’s many interests over the years have led to diverse professional capabilities and personal interests, including: engineer, manager, artist, author, publisher, musician (bass guitar), photographer, craftsman (bicycle frame builder), cooking, vegetable gardening, scholar, and educator.

### **Career Summary**

Bob began working part-time at the age of 13 as a salesperson at Camera Corner South in Coconut Grove, Fla. Subsequent to that, he worked as a laboratory technician and as a freelance writer for *Bicycling*, *Bike Tech*, and *Bicycle Guide* Magazines producing articles on various metallurgical aspects of custom bicycle frames and components. While pursuing his Ph.D., Bob worked at Monet Jewelers (Pawtucket, RI) as a metallurgist in manufacturing operations.

Upon completing his Ph.D., Bob worked at Pratt & Whitney in Florida and Connecticut and held positions of increasing responsibility in engineering, manufacturing operations, supply chain management, and organizational learning. His first exposure to Lean management was in July 1994 as a business unit manager in operations, and he later worked to establish Lean in the supply chain of the commodity he managed. He was trained in Lean by consultants from Shingijutsu Co., Ltd.

Bob left industry in 1999 to join academia as a clinical professor in the Lally School of Management and Technology at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Hartford, Conn. branch). There he taught graduate courses on Lean leadership, supply chain management, and failure analysis of management decisions.

Since 2005, Bob has been at Central Connecticut State University where he teaches various undergraduate and graduate courses and has an active research program in Lean management.

Bob has pioneered the application of Lean principles and practices to the design and delivery of his courses. He was also the first professor to facilitate kaizens in higher education to improve a 10-course executive M.S. degree program.

Bob is one of the most prolific authors on Lean leadership and Lean management, having written ten books and 18 peer-reviewed papers. He has also written 16 peer-reviewed papers on Lean supply chain management and e-business, 10 peer-reviewed papers in materials science and engineering, and numerous non-refereed technical reports and magazine articles. Several of these works have won awards for excellence.

Bob's extensive body of work on Lean management led him to develop a unique short course in Lean leadership for executives that highlight the "Respect for People" principle which is invariably missing in other training courses yet is critical to Lean management success. He is a frequent speaker at corporate meetings and senior management retreats due to his pioneering work in Lean leadership and his deep understanding of the history of progressive management and the "Respect for People" principle.

### **Significant Contributions**

Bob's work in Lean management is informed by his extensive hands-on application of Lean management principles and practices when he worked in the aerospace industry.

Bob's research on Lean leadership began in the mid-1990s and was prescient, for it is only since late 2007 that the broader Lean community has begun to recognize the importance of leadership. He chose to study the least-understood aspect of Lean management – leadership – because it contributes greatly to the difficulty that managers have in correctly understanding and practicing Lean management. Bob's knowledge of the history of progressive management dating from the late 1800s contextualizes today's leadership challenge in ways that are not recognized or understood by others.

Bob was the first researcher to provide a detailed description of how the "Respect for People" principle functions in enabling continuous improvement, and how wasteful leadership behaviors severely undercut efforts to achieve a Lean transformation. He has written several innovative papers that describe practical approaches to identifying leadership problems in organizations that seek to practice Lean management. His books and papers provide readers with direct and effective routes for improving their Lean leadership capabilities and are fully consistent with Lean principles and practices.

Bob's supply chain management research agenda (discontinued in 2007) focused principally on the topic of e-business, specifically electronic reverse auctions used by corporations to purchase goods and services. He is the leading author in this field having written 12 peer-reviewed papers, and has gained international recognition for his work debunking claims of effectiveness and cost savings.